



Metropolitan Offices
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Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal

For release after 2:00 P.M.
Friday, February 28, 1969.

YMCA ON FRONT LINES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Steps being taken to meet some of the more disturbing youth problems in one of Montreal's largest suburban regions were outlined Friday to a group of concerned businessmen by William Pigott, Associate Executive of the West Island YMCA.

This branch of the Montreal YMCA is probably best known for its Ski School--the largest operation of its kind in Canada--and for its recreational, physical, educational and social programs for young people and adults.

But over the past year, more effort has been devoted to recruiting people and involving them in a multi-front effort to meet deep-rooted problems. Unresolved, these could seriously warp the outlook for many thousands of pre-teenagers, as well as adolescents and men and women in their 20s.

By identifying problems and clearly explaining their urgency, this Y has been able to mobilize hundreds of individuals, including many who had never before participated in community development programs.

One tangible result is the West Island Social Action Committee, which he chairs. It is made up of representatives of School Boards,

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Municipal Government, Police, Hospitals, Home and School Associations, Church Groups, teachers, parents and young people.

Current main concern of this organization is the increased usage and trafficking of drugs among young people. This in turn has focused new attention on the need for more recreational facilities and activities for youth, more programs to help parents understand their role, greater involvement of young people in the decisions which will affect them.

Last summer, a Youth Employment Agency, run by and for young people in the West Island area, was able to partly fill a void by finding part-time jobs for 150 students. This project will be re-organized and operated again this coming summer.

Another undertaking that is being watched with close interest involves Dick Hamill, a detached worker with the West Island Y. He and a representative group of students from all major Protestant schools in the area are preparing a proposal which will attempt to define how young people can have a voice on School Boards.

Youth centres at Beaconsfield and Pierrefonds provide young people with further opportunities to exercise initiative. With a YMCA staff member on hand to provide counsel, they set their own standards of behaviour and dress, plan their own programs, and have the responsibility for maintaining the premises.

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In addition to recreational activities, these centres have also prompted the formation of a vocational guidance service and a number of discussion groups.

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